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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (REMOVE ADDRESSEE)
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DEPARTMENT OF EAP/MTS/COPPOLAMG
HQ PLEASE PASS TO SENATOR BILL NELSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/20/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [BX](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: SENATOR BILL NELSON WELL RECEIVED VISIT TO BRUNEI

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) John W. McIntyre for Reasons 1.4(b/d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Senator Bill Nelson's well received visit to Brunei focused on numerous key USG policy goals and objectives. During wide ranging meetings with the Sultan of Brunei, as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II, Pehin Lim Jock Seng, the Senator received assurances that Brunei respects religious freedom, values the USG role in Asia, and is committed to environmental protection. In addition, the Sultan noted that radical Islam has no place in Brunei. The Senator and Sultan also discussed the role of the US military in the region and the Sultan noted one of his sons will be applying to attend West Point. The Sultan also was appreciative of the Senator's offer to visit his home state of Florida as well as the Kennedy Space Center. Pehin Lim offered the Senator his insights into North Korea's continued isolation but need for engagement with the U.S. Pehin Lim also noted that USG engagement with Burma was welcomed by the Government of Brunei (GoB). Both agreed that Indonesia continues to play a crucial role in Southeast Asia but faces many obstacles. Settling border disputes with Malaysia to encourage additional oil and natural gas development was also discussed. Senator Nelson also met with the Minister, Pehin Yayha, and Deputy Minister, Dato Hamdillah, of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR) to discuss environmental protection and eco-tourism development. Brunei believes it offers the natural resources to assist in carbon trading but does not have the technical resources at this time. In addition, while trying to develop their eco-tourism industry, Brunei lacks the critical tourism infrastructure. Senator Nelson noted that Brunei has all the resources raging for high quality resorts to financial means to follow through both on environmental protection and eco-tourism. Brunei has not received a CODEL n almost twelve years. Senator Nelson's visit will greatly enhance U.S. Embassy-Brunei's diplomatic efforts. End Summary

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

2. (C) Senator Bill Nelson (D-Florida) spoke frankly with the Sultan of Brunei regarding issues of religious freedom. As noted in this year's State Department International Religious Freedom Report-----

3. (C) The Sultan and Senator agreed that combating religious extremism and noting the similarity between the world's major religions are key elements in promoting tolerance and in combating terrorism. The Sultan, as well as Pehin Lim, were quick to point out that radical forms of Islam have no place in Brunei. The Government of Brunei (GoB) seeks to prevent the spread of radical Islam through state control of mosques and approval of all sermons. Radicalism

both in Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Middle East are a concern for Brunei, as noted by Pehin Lim. Brunei views itself as model of peaceful coexistence between religions with an Islamic state.

USG ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

¶4. (C) Both the Sultan and Pehin Lim said the US plays a positive role in Asia, especially Southeast Asia. In addition, both were pleased by the growing engagement in Asia by the Obama administration. President Obama's family ties to Indonesia were noted as a positive and both agreed that Southeast Asia continues to play critical role in the fight against terrorism as well as global economic recovery. The Sultan highlighted the importance that Brunei places on ASEAN and the substantial US interactions with Southeast Asia's regional organizations. Increasing US engagement with Southeast Asia and Brunei through trade agreements was noted by the Sultan as a key element to sustained economic recovery. Both also noted that the U.S. continues to serve as a counterbalance to China's expanding role in the region.

BURMA AND NORTH KOREA

¶5. (C) During Senator Nelson's meeting with Pehin Lim, the subject of US engagement with Burma and North Korea was raised. Pehin Lim said the recent visit of U.S. Senator Jim Webb (D-Virginia) to Burma as well as Secretary Clinton's offer of increased USG engagement with the Burmese under the appropriate circumstances.

Pehin

Lim did stress that the GoB and many Southeast Asian nations believe engagement with Burma, versus isolation, is the key to forward progress. A similar thought is also held regarding USG engagement with North Korea. Pehin Lim described in detail his trip to North Korea and noted it was a "true hermit kingdom." He did express the hope that North Korea would fully engage in the Six Party talks and that the era of North Korean brinkmanship would fade.

INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

¶6. (C) Senator Nelson asked both the Sultan and Pehin Lim about relations between Indonesia and Brunei as well as Brunei's closest neighbor, Malaysia. Both agreed relations with Indonesia were good, with Pehin Lim noting that Indonesia has a number of challenges, both political and economic before it. He noted President Yudhoyono is faced with significant issues, especially in the areas of counter-terrorism and economic development. Pehin Lim stated that Indonesia plays a critical role in Southeast Asia and the Muslim world. The Sultan noted that relations with Malaysia are excellent and improving, especially as border disputes are being resolved and more cross border investments is occurring. (NOTE: Neither the Sultan nor Pehin Lim would give specifics on how exactly the various border disputes have been resolved. End Note.) Investment by Malaysia companies into new oil and gas development on formerly disputed land and sea blocks was noted, but not confirmed, as a possible means to encourage additional investment and revenue generation for both Brunei and Malaysia.

CONSERVATION AND ECO-TOURISM

7 (SBU) During his meeting with the Sultan, as well as the Minister (Pehin Yayha) and Deputy Minister (Dato Hamdillah) of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR), the Senator commented on Brunei's impressive conservation efforts. The Sultan highlighted that Brunei wishes to conserve and use wisely its natural resources.

Pehin

Yayha highlighted the vast amounts of tropical forests that Brunei is conserving and described in detail the dramatic difference between Brunei and Malaysia in this regard. He noted that the border between the two countries can easily be seen from above due the drastic deforestation on the

Malaysia side. Pehin Yahya and Dato Hamdillah stated that Brunei believes it is a potential partner for carbon trading but lack the technical expertise at this time to move forward. Brunei is working to preserve not only tropical rain forests but also peat moss swamps as potential carbon sinks. Both noted that China could be a potential partner in this regard. Both the Sultan and Pehin Yahya said that conservation should go hand in hand with developing eco-tourism. Pehin Yahya and Dato Hamdillah did say that the eco-tourism infrastructure is still developing.

MILITARY TO MILITARY TIES

¶8. (C) Senator Nelson complimented the Sultan not only on a successful international military show (BRIDEX) but also on the successful completion of another series of U.S. and Brunei military to military exercises. The Sultan noted he is pleased with the strong ties that Brunei's military has with the U.S. Military. He also highlighted his visit to the U.S. Pacific Areas Command (PACOM). The Sultan added that he is happy that Prince Mateen has shown an interest in attending West Point and that he looks forward to accompanying his son to West Point for enrollment.

BRUNEI'S TIES TO FLORIDA

¶9. (SBU) Senator Nelson noted Brunei's ties to Florida, especially the Vero Beach area with the recent purchase of Piper Aircraft by the Imprimus investment firm. Piper is now wholly owned by Imprimus. Imprimus received significant funding from both the Brunei Ministry of Finance and Brunei Investment Agency (BIA). Piper's new president, John Becker, reported to the Senator that Imprimus is a long term investor but also is looking to expand Piper's market into Asia. The Sultan noted he was happy that Brunei had such significant investments in Florida businesses and noted that his enthusiasm for the aviation industry.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Without a CODEL visit in over twelve years, the GoB was truly appreciative of Senator Nelson's visit. The meetings with his Majesty and Pehin Lim were cordial, substantive, and much longer than is the norm in Brunei. Senator Nelson's wealth of experience, knowledge and openness during discussions significantly helps to advance U.S. Embassy-Brunei's diplomatic agenda. We were very pleased and fortunate that the CODEL chose to come to Brunei and we look forward to their return in the future.

CODEL Nelson cleared this cable.

TODD